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CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT STUDY
MOUNT AIRY

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MOUNT AIRY, NORTH CAROLINA

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT STUDY

TITLE: Central Business District Study
Mount Airy, North Carolina

AUTHOR: Division of Community Planning
Department of Conservation and Development
Raleigh, North Carolina

SUBJECT: Revitalization of the downtown area.

DATE: May, 1968.

LOCAL PLANNING AGENCY: City of Mount Airy, North Carolina

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ABSTRACT: This report is the proposals section of a Preliminary Development Plan for the Central Area of Mount Airy, N. C. (Detailed background support data was collected and published only in ditto form for the city). The study analyzes the major problem categories, i.e. conflicting land use patterns, automobile accessibility and circulation, parking, pedestrian access and circulation, building conditions and business attitudes. From these evaluations conclusions are drawn and recommendations are made in the form of a Preliminary Development Plan for the central area. Recommendations for meeting projected square footage needs in retail sales area and parking spaces is also included. The conclusions and projections are followed by a discussion of the different areas of responsibility for implementation within the central area. Merchant and citizen involvement, city government responsibilities and the possibilities of Urban Renewal are presented with a list of priorities for each group.

MOUNT AIRY, NORTH CAROLINA

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT STUDY

The preparation of this report was financed in part through an urban planning grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, under the provision of Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954, as amended.

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MAY, 1968

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INTRODUCTION

In preparation for this report much research and background work has been developed to be used as a basis for the conclusions and proposals that are put forth in this study. Due to the technical nature and the amount of material that was compiled, this information has been bound in a separate publication and printed in a limited number of copies. Copies of this material have been distributed to the members of the Town Board, members of the Planning Board, City Officials and to other agencies and individuals that can make appropriate use of this data. In addition, file copies will be kept at City Hall for reference by any interested parties. This study will attempt to develop an overall approach to revitalize the central core area into a shopping-business-social facility that will truly be an integral part of the everyday life of its citizens and an area that each individual will take pride in.

It will be very easy to discuss the potentials that are available in Mount Airy and it will be reasonably easy to arrive at a "paper" plan that will solve most of the physical problems of the downtown area. It will even be possible to arrive at a "paper" plan that will solve most of the physical problems of the downtown area. It will even be possible to arrive at a "paper" plan that will, generally, satisfy the downtown merchants, the planning commission, the city council and the citizenry at large, but the physical problem of turning a "paper" plan into a living reality is one that will tax the ingenuity and patience of every involved citizen to their limits. The development plan will always be only as good as the people that are responsible for its development.

Many, many "paper" plans are developed only to be shelved because some group failed to persist in the face of new problems. At this point in the program the chances are

far more likely that no results will ever be gained from this study and that each merchant will continue to make improvements to his own establishment while not being able to affect any change on the overall problem of the central area.

To be somewhat more optimistic the City of Mount Airy has had the initiative and awareness to recognize that as a city it has problems within its downtown area and some overall view had to be made that would identify its problems and in turn propose their solution. Further, the Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Merchants Committee have worked together to solve some of their common problems with some positive results. Adding to the plus side of the situation the city has a positive attitude about urban renewal projects which have thus far been implemented within the city's limits. This open frame of mind will be a definite asset in working out problems of the future. Overall the city has a good attitude toward improving within the downtown and hopefully this enthusiasm will continue long enough for the physical changes to be made.

A project such as the one proposed in this study is extensive and will not be donw overnight nor will it be completed without much work on the part of many individuals. The projects will require time to develop in detail and these will require even more time to finance and construct. This study report is of a preliminary nature and will need refinements as the different projects are turned over to engineers, architects and landscape architects for detailing. There will also be many projects that can be done through local organizations of the merchants with only the minimum of outside help needed. This preliminary plan and study will attempt to deal with the overall problems of the core area and their solution in general form.

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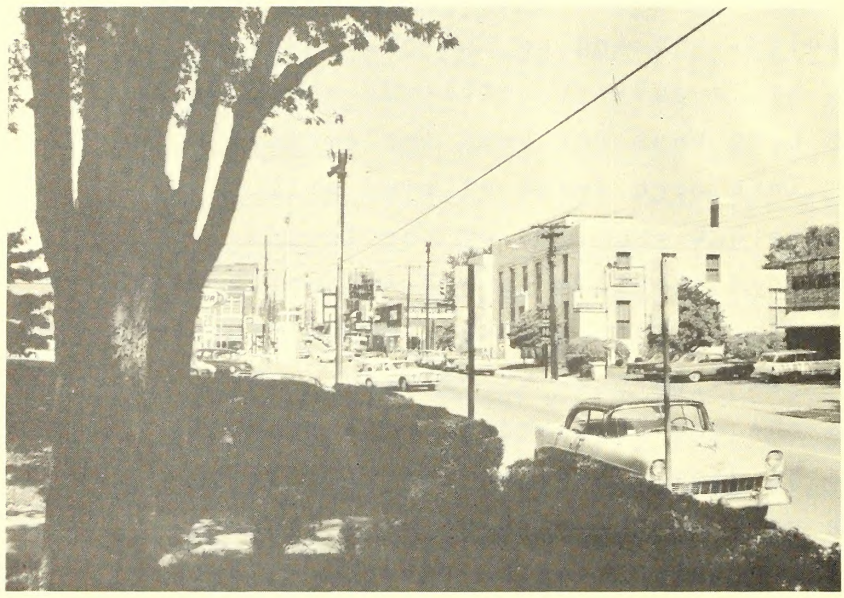

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CONSIDERATIONS

MAJOR CONSIDERATIONS

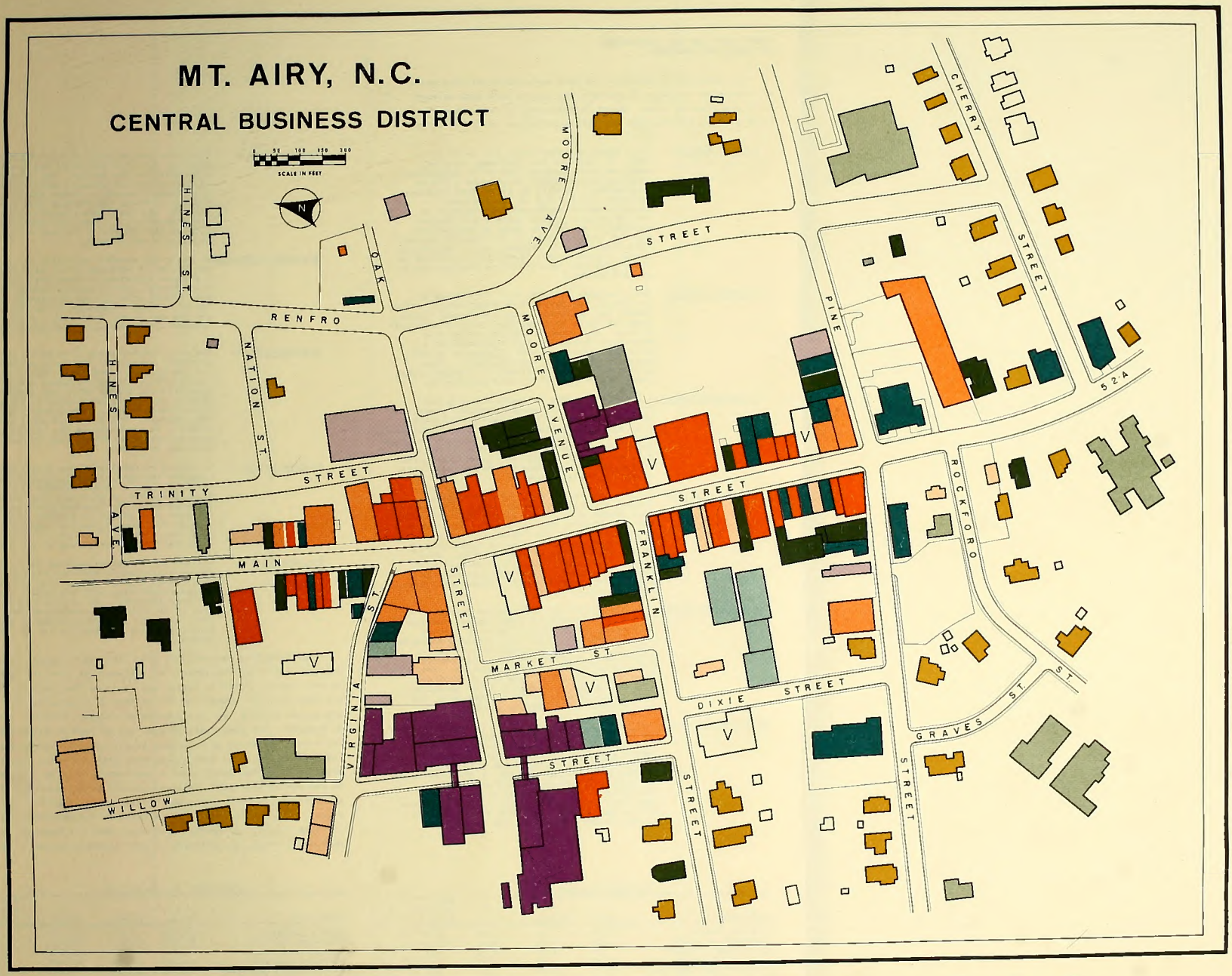
The major considerations of the Preliminary Plan are basic. The principle needs of the customer-shopper in Mount Airy are much the same as those in any community throughout the country and must be approached in general terms before any specifics can be mentioned. The basic considerations are presented here in an attempt to group the problems of the core area into several different categories that can be dealt with in an organized manner. From these elements it will be possible to consider specific solutions and proposals for the core area.

Accessibility

It will do the merchant little good to stock his store with desirable merchandise if his customers cannot reach his store easily. The routes to the city must tie directly to the major commercial areas in the city. The potential customer must think only of arriving at his desired destination, not of an arduous task of getting to the center of the city. It may seem far afield for the downtown merchant to be concerned with rural and suburban roads, but it will only be through the development of good roads, bypasses, thoroughfarea and improved access that the businessman and professional can expose his merchandise or service to the greatest number of people.

Circulation

Circulation is part of accessibility but such an important part that it must be considered separately. Upon arriving within the downtown area the potential customer must move as near his destination as possible. He may enter the central area from the opposite side he wishes to visit or the customer may wish to circulate until



EXISTING LAND USE

LEGEND

- PRIMARY RETAIL
- SECONDARY RETAIL
- CONVENIENCE RETAIL
- PERSONAL SERVICES
- REPAIR SERVICES
- PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
- SOCIAL & CULTURAL
- MANUFACTURING
- WHOLESALE & STORAGE
- TRANSPORTATION
- RESIDENTIAL
- V VACANT

MOUNT AIRY LAND USE CATEGORIES
AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

For purposes of analysis, 11 land use categories were chosen to portray the variety of economic and social functions carried on in the downtown area. Brief descriptions of each category, their present distribution and future potential are given below.

Primary Retail -- This category constitutes the basis for a CBD. It includes the clothing, fabrics, shoe, notions, jewelry and other comparison shopping goods stores which make a CBD so convenient. It will be noted from land-use map that all but two of the business establishments which can legitimately be called primary retail outlets are located on Main Street within about a three-block stretch (from Robby's to the Apparel Outlet). This clustering of primary, i.e., comparison goods, retail stores should be reinforced in the Design Plan which will be the end result of this study.

Secondary Retail-- This category includes such facilities as furniture, appliance, home furnishings, office supply and equipment, used cars, auto supply, feed and seed, hardware and building materials stores. This type of use is pretty well scattered throughout the downtown area -- although there is a sort of cluster at the northern end of the shopping core. This scattered pattern is likely to continue since these facilities do not need to cluster.

Convenience Retail-- Included in this category are drug and proprietary stores, grocery stores, produce stands, meat markets, and service stations. Here again the pattern of one of scatteration. Some of the grocery stores and service stations which are presently downtown will probably move out or simply quit business; the pattern nationwide is for these businesses to locate closer to their clientele.

Personal Services-- Barber and beauty shops, photo studies, funeral homes, shoe repair shops, dry cleaners, taxi stands and communications offices, cafes and restaurants, hotels, motels, theaters and pool halls fit in this category. Most of these establishments are located at opposite ends of the CBD core or on side streets. They serve a very useful function and will most likely stay downtown in approximately the same numbers indefinitely. There are a few upstairs beauty shops.

Professional Services-- Because of the office-type nature of these uses the bulk of their square footage is located on the upper floors of various business blocks. There are numerous financial institutions, insurance agencies, a few accountants, medical offices, and lawyers (as well as the Town Hall) downtown. This pattern will probably fade out as more and more businesses seek ground floor locations. Some upper floors have been remodelled, but most of them remain pretty shoddy.

Social & Cultural-- The uses which fit into this category include the South Main and Rockford Street Schools, the YMCA, Community College quarters, a Masonic Temple and three churches (one abandoned). It is likely that both of the schools will someday be abandoned because of the obsolescene of their physical plants and playground facilities. The other uses seem to be permanent assets of the area -- excepting the old Central Methodist Church which ought to be demolished to make way for parking.

Repair Services-- There are few of these establishments in the downtown area now and there are likely to be even fewer in the future. The largest cluster of them is in the garage complex facing Dixie and Franklin Streets. Other examples are the Shelton Plumbing and Heating Shop and the electric and sheet metal shops on Oak Street (near Junction). These uses normally locate outside the CBD and it is just as well, especially the garages.

Wholesale & Storage-- There are several wholesale and storage facilities in downtown Mount Airy including a tobacco warehouse, a bona fide junk yard, feed storage, tire storage, lumber storage, etc. These uses are not derogatory except for the rather ramshackle tobacco warehouse and the Oak Street junk yard. None is, however, appropriate in the retail shopping core.

Manufacturing -- The only manufacturing uses which are presently within the CBD area, as defined, are the Spencer's and Renfro Mills and the Coca-Cola Bottling Company plant. Both Spencer's and Renfro Mills are large installations and are there to stay -- although their quarters are hardly architectural masterpieces. The Coca-Cola plant will probably be relocated as its site becomes more valuable for other, more typical, downtown purposes.

Transportation -- It should be noted that the Transportation category includes only off-street transportation uses. Street acreage was figured separately, but is obviously not colored on land-use map. The Transportation category includes such things as parking lots and, because they were so hard to separate from said lots, alleys. This use is tremendously important to the efficiency of the CBD.

Residential -- All of the residences spotted in the CBD area are located in what has been called the "Fringe Area". Hence, they are not in direct competition with businesses for prime business property. It is foreseeable that most of the closer-in residences will be converted into offices or shops or torn down completely to make way for new business structures.

The foregoing material has been designed to answer some of the "what's, why's and wherefore's of the existing land use picture. It will now be useful to answer the question "how much?" Within the Core Area the number one use of land is Transportation (mostly off-street parking lots and associated alleys), followed closely by Streets. The number one in-door use of land is Primary Retail facilities, followed by Secondary Retail outlets. Professional and Personal Services both occupy more than one acre. The Fringe Area, on the other hand, shows a contrasting picture. Vacant Land is the number one "use", followed closely by Residential. Transportation is in third place and Streets are in fourth. Convenience Retail, Social & Cultural, Repair Services and Manufacturing are all more typical or important here than they are Downtown. (Wholesale and Storage, surprisingly is more common downtown.) These

LAND USE IN ACRES

Land Uses	Core	Fringe	Total	Per Cent of Total
Primary Retail	2.98	.11	3.09	2.9
Secondary Retail	2.00	1.53	3.53	3.3
Convenience Retail	.78	1.27	2.05	1.9
Personal Services	1.30	.95	2.25	2.1
Professional Services 1/	1.11	1.00	2.11	2.0
Social & Cultural	.09	3.07	3.16	3.0
Repair Services	.46	.81	1.27	1.2
Wholesale & Storage	.56	.20	.76	.7
Manufacturing	.31	2.15	2.46	2.3
Transportation 2/	7.30	15.70	23.00	21.6
Residential	.00	21.78	21.78	20.5
Streets	5.47	9.43	14.90	14.0
Vacant Land	.14	25.89	26.03	24.5
Total	22.50	83.89	106.39	100.0

1/ Includes public and medical offices.

2/ Includes off-street parking and alleys.

Source: N. C. Division of Community Planning.

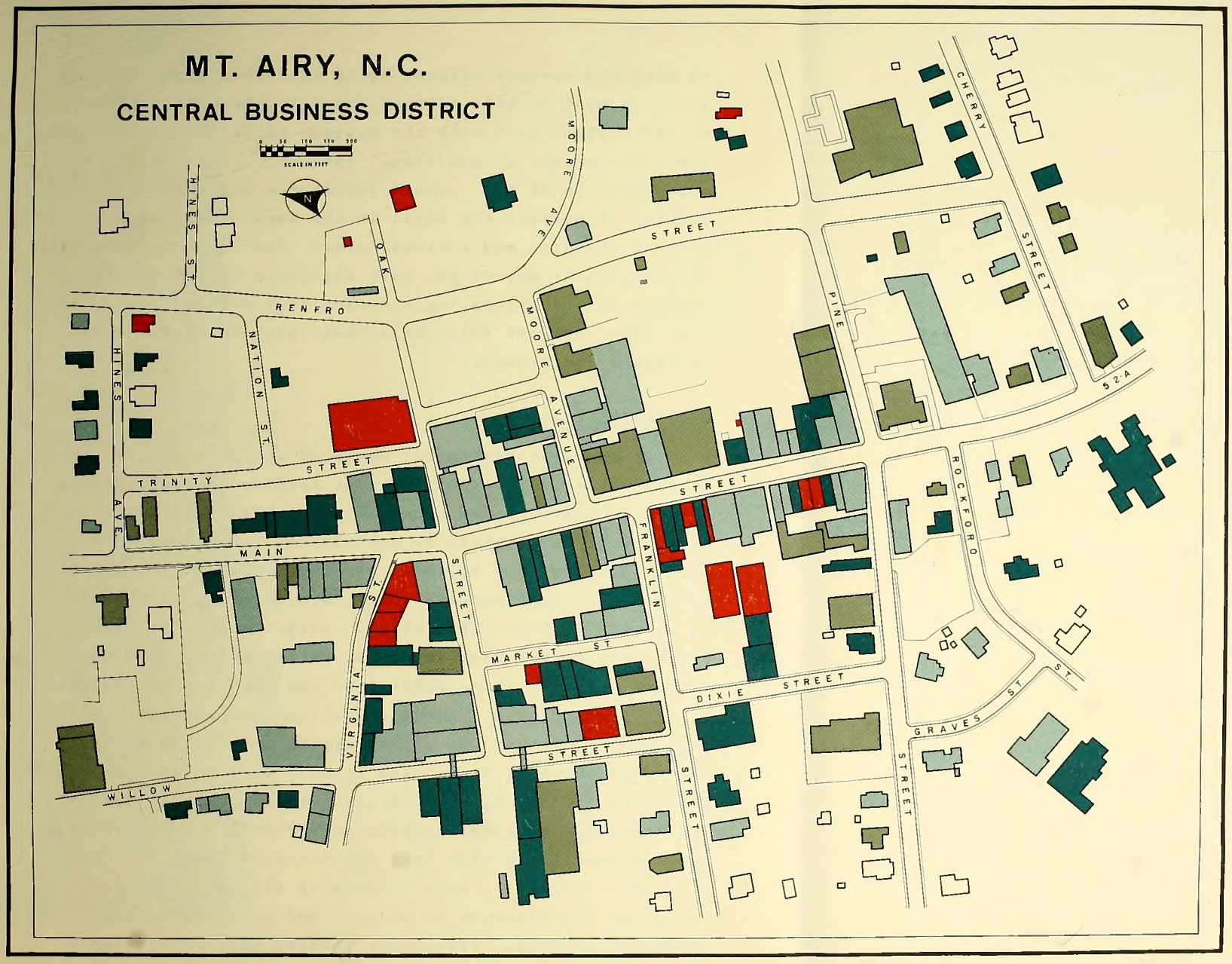
LAND USES IN SQUARE FEET

Land Uses	Core	Fringe	Total	Per Cent of Total
Primary Retail	129,760	4,840	134,600	2.9
Secondary Retail	87,200	66,800	154,000	3.3
Convenience Retail	33,725	55,475	89,200	1.9
Personal Services	56,400	41,600	98,000	2.1
Professional Services 1/	48,400	43,425	91,825	2.0
Social & Cultural	4,000	133,600	137,600	3.0
Repair Services	20,000	35,200	55,200	1.2
Wholesale and Storage	22,400	8,000	30,400	.7
Manufacturing	13,600	93,600	107,200	2.3
Transportation 2/	318,000	684,000	1,002,000	21.6
Residential	0	950,400	950,400	20.5
Streets	240,502	410,600	651,102	14.0
Vacant Land	6,098	1,127,629	1,133,727	24.5
Total	980,085	3,655,169	4,635,254	100.0

1/ Includes public and medical offices.

2/ Includes off-street parking and alleys.

Source: N. C. Division of Community Planning.



STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS MAP

LEGEND

SATISFACTORY

MINOR REPAIR

MAJOR REPAIR

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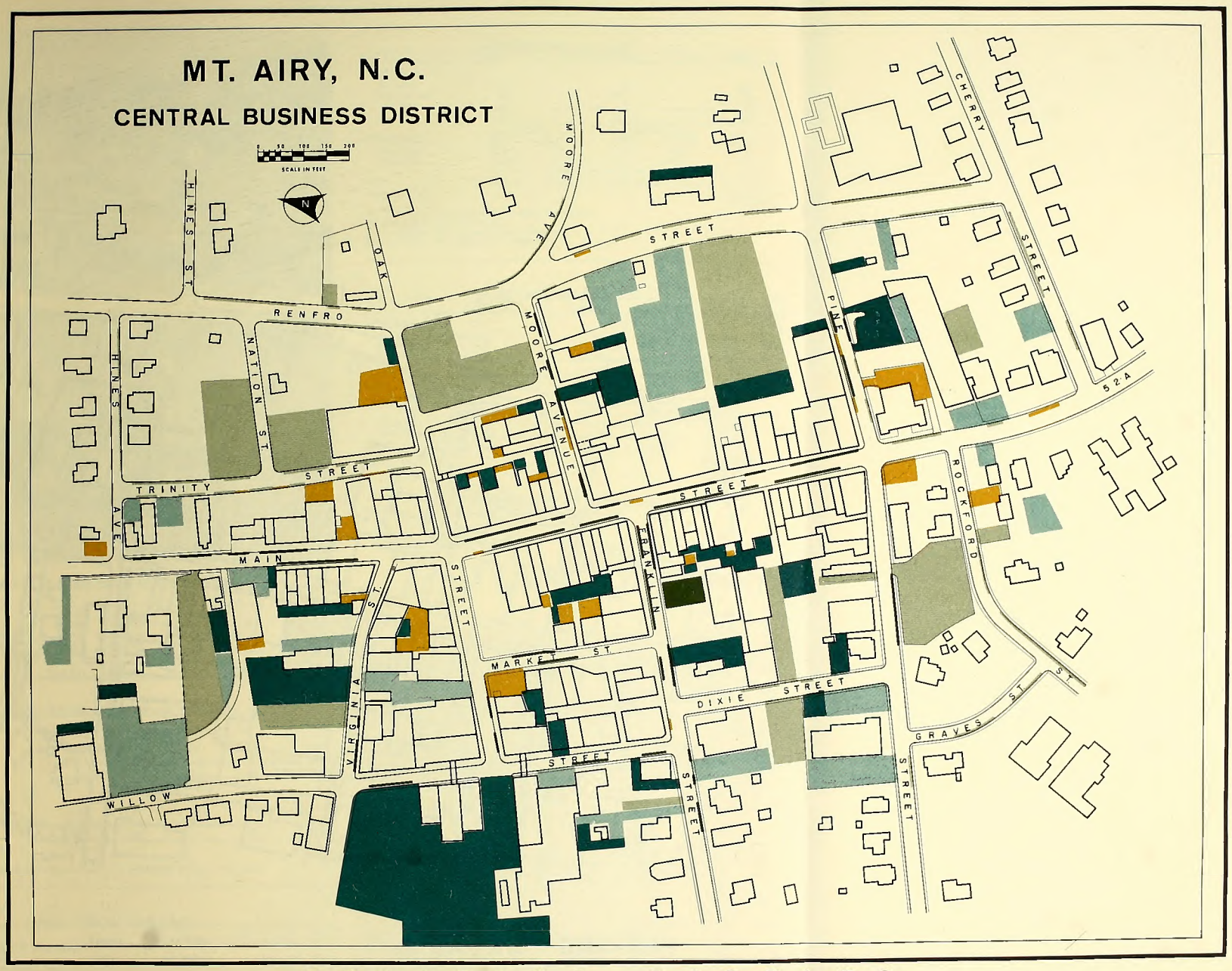
he sees the service offered he is concerned with. At any rate, he must be able to move about in his automobile within the central area with the maximum amount of freedom and a minimum amount of conflict. Internal circulation movements will be of the utmost importence and must be considered as primary and basic in the development of a vital central shopping and business area. Inefficient automobile circulation is one of the most discouraging and defeating aspects of any struggling shopping facility and any location that does not solve this basic problem cannot expect to expand and prosper.

Off-Street Parking

If a proper system for movement can be developed then it follows that once the customer arrives in the downtown area his first concern after locating his destination is to store his automobile as quickly and conveniently as possible. Having a customer who knows that he or she will have a convenient parking space upon arriving in the CBD is an extremely valuable asset. Adequate parking will ultimately be the most important enticement to come to the downtown area to shop, other than the need for merchandise or services offered. Ample off-street parking must be provided and it must be within approximately 350 feet of the major shopping street and it must be provided on a permanent basis. It does little good if a vacant lot is developed for customer parking and after a year or so when the customer has gotten into the habit of using the lot the owner decides to sell or develop the lot. The merchant loses and the customer is annoyed and probably will go elsewhere to shop. Off-street parking must be developed on a large scale if the downtown is going to complete with commercial facilities on the fringe of the city and this parking must be provided on a permanent basis. Permanent parking can be established by the city, by the



EXISTING PARKING

PUBLIC	ON STREET	OFF STREET
METERED	159	15
UNMETERED	236	507
SPECIFIED	0	581
TOTALS	359	1103

PRIVATE	ON STREET	OFF STREET
EMPLOYEE *	0	828
COMMERCIAL		
TAXIS, TRUCKS, LOADING	27	APPROX. 131
	27	959

* INCLUDES 360 INDUSTRIAL SITES

PARKING AREAS

PARKING BY NUMBER OF SPACES[1]

	Core	Fringe	Total
ON-STREET			
Metered	121	38	159
Unmetered	18	218	236
Loading	20	7	27
Total	159	263	422

	PAVED		FRINGE		
OFF-STREET	Core	Fringe	Core	Fringe	Total
Customer	192	338	64	494	1,088
Employee	162[2]	410[3]	119	137	828
Total	354	748	183	631	1,916
Crand Total					2,338

1/ Does not include off-street loading.
2/ Includes 66 indoors.
3/ Includes 322 industrial spaces.
4/ Includes 38 industrial spaces.

EXISTING SQUARE FEET OF PARKING

	Core	Fringe	Total
ON-STREET			
Metered	24,200	7,600	31,800
Unmetered	3,600	43,600	47,200
Loading	4,000	1,400	5,400
Total	31,800	52,600	84,400

	PAVED		UNPAVED		
OFF-STREET	Core	Fringe	Core	Fringe	Total
Customer	76,800	135,200	15,200	197,600	424,800
Employee	64,800	164,000	47,600	54,800	331,200
Total	141,600	299,200	62,800	252,400	756,000
Crand Total					840,400 sq. ft.

Source: N. C. Division of Community Planning

LAND USES IN SQUARE FEET - BY PARKING AREAS

Land Uses	1	2	3	4	Total
Primary Retail	44,360	23,675	28,090	24,375	120,500
Secondary Retail	34,200	29,200	20,600	32,400	116,400
Convenience Retail	1,750	39,775	15,050	9,775	66,350
Personal Services	14,025	31,730	10,700	8,100	64,555
Professional Services	20,300	20,520	8,650	7,450	56,920
Total	114,635	144,900	83,090	82,100	424,725

EXISTING CUSTOMER PARKING SPACES BY AREAS[1]

	1	2	3	4	Total
ON-STREET					
Metered	44	49	47	16	156
Unmetered	21	14	0	12	47
Total	65	63	47	28	203
OFF-STREET					
Paved	127	65	30	52	274
Unpaved	190	122	40	30	382
Total	317	187	70	82	656
Crand Total					859

1/ Does not include loading zones or employee parking spaces.

PARKING SPACE AND SALES SPACE

		Spaces		Sq. Ft. in Parking		Sq. Ft. of Sales Area	Approx. Ratio
Core:	On-street & customer off-street	395		119,800		361,000	1:3
	Add employees spaces (all off-street)	+281	676	+112,400	232,200	361,000	2:3
Fringe:	On-street & customer off-street	1,088		384,000		48,400	8:1
	Add employees spaces (all off-street)	+547	1,635	+218,800	602,800	48,400	12.5:1
Total:	On-street & customer off-street	1,483		503,800		409,400	1.23:1
Total:	Add employee spaces (all off-street)	828	2,311	331,200	835,000	409,400	2:1

Source: N. C. Division of Community Planning.

PRESENT CUSTOMER PARKING DEFICIENCIES BY AREAS

Area	Land Use	Sq. Ft.	Ratio	Spaces
1	Primary Retail	44,360	2:1	222
	Other Uses[1]	70,275	1:1	176
Existing total spaces needed for customer parking				398
Existing total supply of spaces for customer parking				382
Present customer parking deficiency in Area 1				16
2	Primary Retail	23,675	2:1	118
	Other Uses[1]	121,225	1:1	303
Existint total spaces needed for customer parking				421
Existing total supply of spaces for customer parking				250
Present customer parking deficiency in Area 2				171*
*109 customer parking spaces south of Dixie Street might help alleviate this deficiency; however, 65 customer spaces in the lot south of the library are not presently in use.				
3	Frimary Retail	28,090	2:1	140
	Other Uses[1]	55,000	1:1	138
Existing total spaces needed for customer parking				278
Existing total supply of spaces for customer parking				117
Present customer deficiency in Area 3				161
4	Frimary Retail	24,375	2:1	122
	Other Uses[1]	57,725	1:1	144
Existing total spaces needed for customer parking				266
Existing total supply of spaces for customer parking				110
Present customer deficiency in Area 4				136*
*191 customer parking spaces just beyond Area 4 would cancel this deficiency				
Existing Crand Total spaces needed for customer parking				1,363
Existing Crand Total supply of spaces for customer parking				859
Present customer parking deficiency in all four Areas				504

1/ Includes secondary and convenience retail; also personal and professional services.

Source: N. C. Division of Community Planning.

benefiting merchants or by some combination of the two, but it must be provided.

Pedestrian Access and Circulation

The dependency of man on his automobile has both its good and bad aspects, but just the problem of the sheer numbers of vehicles is beginning to have many undesirable side effects. The space required for the circulation and storage of automobiles has placed a strain on the available open properties within the downtown area and this strain is reflected in more and more effort being directed toward bigger, wider and straighter roads and streets, with every available square foot of vacant land being used for parking. This being the case, it is understandable that very little attention is being given the pedestrian shopper. From the time the walking customer leaves his automobile until he arrives at his destination he is in constant conflict with either the moving or parked car. Engineers expend great thought, and elaborate machines are used to produce better and more efficient methods of moving traffic, but only the minimum of space and accommodations are allowed for when dealing with the pedestrian. Ideally once the walking customer leaves his vehicle he should no longer have to compete with wheeled traffic. From his car the pedestrian should be able to walk easily through landscaped alleys or pedestrian accessways to the main shopping area. Once in the main shopping area the walking customer should be "king" within an area totally devoted to his needs and his scale. There should be areas for window shopping, for walking, for just standing about, areas with seats and benches for resting or waiting. And intermingled so as to become a part of the total scene there should be trees, fountains, pools, sculpture and landscaping in general as the situation requires. The area that is outside of the stores, shops and offices must

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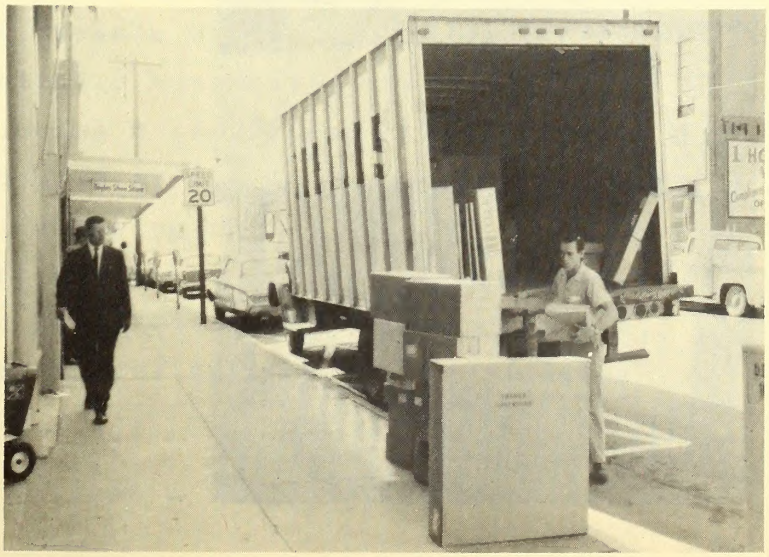
MOUNT AIRY NEWS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PARK FREE
AND SHOP
LEONS

SPENCER'S INC.

be developed until it becomes a place with a positive identity. The downtown must begin to serve as a place of social gatherings and events, it must be identified as not just a place to buy a tube of toothpaste, but as a place where friends are met, good times enjoyed -- in general, a desirable place to be.

Business Attitudes

If all of the aforementioned objectives were recognized and through great effort they were developed into a functioning reality there would still be two additional aspects of the downtown which would need consideration. It will make little difference whether the customer is brought swiftly to the center of town, his vehicle stored conveniently and he is then in a pleasant atmosphere if the businesses, services and professionals within the area do not appreciate and compete for the customer's patronage. This, of course, applies more directly to department stores and shops that carry comparative goods and merchandise. Any major shopping facility whether it be one large department store or an entire shopping center that is attempting to attract a major portion of the sales in a given area must have a positive sales campaign. The downtown must generate activity by having sales that include the entire central area. A new business must try harder than an older more established one and by the same token old businesses often fall into a pattern of business habits that are possibly not as dynamic as they should be. Therefore, both new and established businesses must be aware of the pitfalls of developing a complacent attitude. The central area must be promoted as a unified group of merchants providing a total shopping facility.

This positive position must be reflected not only in the merchandise sold and the attitude of the merchant, it must also be demonstrated in the quality of the building

RETAIL SALES, 1954-1963, SURRY CDUNTY, WITH 1970 PRDJECTIDN

	1954	1958	Per Cent Change	1963	Per Cent Change	197D (Proj.)
No. of ests.	528	622	+17.8	692	+11.3	
Sales ($000)	$38,762	$50,167	+29.4	$62,758	+27.1	
Payroll ($000)	$ 3,309	$ 4,197	+26.8	$ 5,974	+42.3	
No. of employees	1,659	1,911	+15.2	1,989	+ 4.1	
Kind of Business Croup:						
Food stores	$ 8,291	$10,897	+31.4	$13,713	+25.8	$17,930
Eating, drinking places	1,314	2,246	+70.9	2,552	+13.6	3,515
General merchandise group	4,693	4,107	-12.5	3,541	-13.8	3,645*
Apparel, accessories stores	2,263	4,225	+86.7	5,869	+38.9	8,673
Furniture, home furnishings, appliance dealers	1,961	3,024	+54.2	3,489	+15.4	4,678
Automotive group	8,634	10,326	+19.6	14,619	+41.6	19,274
Casoline service stations	2,735	3,354	+22.6	6,253	+86.4	8,990
Lumber, bldg, materials, hardware, farm equipment dealers	3,683	5,237	+42.2	4,482	-14.4	5,104
Drug stores, proprietary stores	1,050	1,630	+55.2	2,706	+66.0	4,211
Dther retail stores	(D)					
Non-store retailers	(D)	165	--	1,111	+573.3	2,436
Total	$38,762	$50,167		$63,758		$84,533*

*This figure is adjusted upward by $1,000,000.

Source: U. S. Census, compiled by N. C. DCP.

RETAIL SALES 1954-1963, REMAINDER DF SURRY CDUNTY (Excluding Mount Airy), WITH 1970 PRDJECTIDN

	1954	1958	Per Cent Change	1963	Per Cent Change	1970(Pr
No. of ests.	256	395	+54.3	425	+ 7.6	
Sales ($00D)	$36,443	$29,059	+76.7	$33,082	+13.8	
Payroll ($000)	$ 1,337	$ 2,304	+72.3	$ 2,884	+25.2	
No. of employees	669	1,003	+49.9	934	- 6.9	
Kind of Business Croup:						
Food stores	$ 4,095	$ 6,740	+64.6	$ 7,441	+10.4	$10,043
Eating, drinking places	493	1,376	+179.1	1,477	+ 7.3	2,242
General merchandise group	2,227	2,152	- 3.4	1,691	-21.4	1,774*
Apparel, accessories stores	490	1,704	+247.8	2,531	+48.5	4,118
Furniture, home furnishings, appliance dealers	649	1,194	+84.0	1,014	-15.1	1,298
Automotive group	4,090	7,487	+83.1	8,853	+18.2	12,558
Casoline service stations	1,123	2,028	+80.6	3,933	+93.9	6,119
Lumber, bldg. materials, hardware, farm equip, dealers	1,32D	2,767	+109.6	1,933	-30.1	2,410
Drug stores, proprietary stores	(D)	767	--	1,071	+39.6	1,496
Dther retail stores	(D)	2,715	--	2,590	- 4.6	2,415
Non-store retailers	(D)	129	--	548	+324.8	1,135
Total	$16,443	$29,059		$33,082		$45,608*

*This figure is adjusted upward by $500,000.

Source: U. S. Census, compiled by N. C. DCP.

(D) = Disclosure

MDUNT AIRY'S SHARE DF SURRY CDUNTY'S RETAIL SALES

Category of Coods	1954	1958	Per Cent Change 1954-1958	1963	Per Cent Change 1958-1963	Per Cent Change 1954-1963
Food stores	50.6	38.1	-12.5	45.7	+ 7.6	- 4.9
Eating & drinking places	62.5	38.7	-23.8	42.1	+ 3.4	-20.4
General merchandise group	52.5	47.6	- 4.9	52.2	+ 4.6	- 0.3
Apparel & accessories	78.3	59.7	-18.6	56.9	- 2.8	-21.4
Furniture & appliances	66.9	60.5	- 6.4	70.9	+10.4	+ 4.0
Lumber & hardware	64.2	47.2	-17.0	56.9	+ 9.7	- 7.3
Automotive group	52.6	27.5	-25.1	39.4	+11.9	-13.2
Service stations	58.9	39.5	-19.4	37.1	- 2.4	-21.8
Drug stores	(D)	52.9	--	60.4	+ 7.5	
Dther Retail	(D)	44.5	--	52.D	+ 7.5	
Total	60.8	45.6	-15.2	51.4	+ 5.8	- 9.4

Source: Compiled by N. C. DCP from U. S. Census data.

As the above table shows, Mount Airy suffered a tremendous proportional leakage of business to firms in the balance of the county between 1954 and 1958 -- ranging from a 4.9 percent loss in the general merchandise group to a 25.1 percent loss in the automotive group. The latter category and the eating and drinking places are characterized by firms which are typically moving to bypass locations nationwide. Then too, some of this loss has been due to the town's failure to annex contiguous strip commercial areas. At any rate, the overall proportion of the county's total sales which were garnered by Mount Airy merchants decreased from 60.8 percent in 1954 to 45.6 percent in 1958. Between 1958 and 1963 there was an almost uniform gain in the town's proportion of total county retail sales. In fact, the only two categories which did not show a percentage increase were the apparel and service stations categories. The largest gains were registered by the automotive and furniture and appliances groups. The overall percentage change between 1958 and 1963 was 5.8 percent to the good. Considering the entire span of nine years covered in the table, and ignoring the recession year of 1958, it appears that the trend has been downward (-9.4%). The categories which have suffered the most, proportionately, are service stations, apparel group, eating and drinking places and the automotive group.

RETAIL SALES, 1954-1963, MDUNT AIRY, WITH 1970 PROJ.

	1954	1958	Per Cent Change	1963	Per Cent Change	1970(Pr
No. of ests.	272	227	-16.5	267	+17.6	
Sales ($000)	$22,319	$21,108	- 5.4	$30,676	+45.3	
Payroll ($000)	$ 1,972	$ 1,893	- 4.D	$ 3,090	+63.2	
No. of employees	990	908	- 8.3	1,055	+16.2	
Kind of Business Croup:						
Food stores	$ 4,196	$ 4,157	- 0.9	$ 6,272	+50.9	$ 7,887
Eating, drinking places	821	870	+ 6.0	1,075	+23.6	1,273
General merchandise group	2,466	1,955	-20.7	1,850	- 5.4	1,871*
Apparel, accessories stores	1,773	2,521	+42.2	3,338	+32.4	4,555
Furniture, home furnishings, appliance dealers	1,312	1,830	+39.5	2,475	+35.2	3,380
Automotive group	4,544	2,839	-37.5	5,766	+103.1	6,716
Casoline service stations	1,612	1,326	-17.7	2,32D	+75.0	2,871
Lumber, bldg. materials, hardware, farm equipment dealers	2,363	2,470	+ 4.5	2,549	+ 3.2	2,694
Drug stores, proprietary stores	(D)	863	--	1,635	+89.5	2,715
Non-store retailers	(D)	36	--	563	1,463.9	1,301
Dther retail stores	2,226	2,241	+ 0.7	2,833	+26.4	3,662
	$22,319	$21,108		$3D,676		$38,925*

*This figure is adjusted upward by $500,000.

Source: U. S. Census, compiled by N. C. DCP.

(D) = Disclosure

where the business is conducted. Updated merchandising methods will lose much of their effect if they are conducted within an outdated facility. The physical character of a place of business has a great influence on the customer's attitude toward shopping or not shopping. Many owners of buildings could do a great deal to improve their appearance simply by removing items that have collected over a period of years. These could be signs, posters, unused lights, railing or any one of a dozen things. Usually the more simple a building is, the more successful it is visually. Paint is probably the simplest, least expensive and generally the most successful of all of the available renovation materials. With a little thought dynamic changes can be made both on the exterior and the interior. It also must be realized that while painting, and in general cleaning up and fixing up, will accomplish much it is not the ultimate in renovation and only through planning and coordination with professionals such as Engineers, Architects, and Landscape Architects can the best results be obtained.

RETAIL SALES AND SQUARE FOOTAGE COMPARATIVE -- 1963

Category of Goods	Total Receipts	Amount Assigned to CBD	Present Square Footage	Dollar Volume Per Square Foot	Desirable Volume
Primary Retail[1]	$8,021,000	$ 8,021,000	134,600	$59.59	$60.00
Secondary Retail[2]	$11,353,000	$ 5,491,000	154,000	$35.65	$40.00
Convenience Retail[3]	$11,302,000	$ 5,073,000	99,200	$51.13	$80.00
Total	$30,676,000	$18,585,000 (or 60.58% of the total)	387,800	$48.79 (Average)	$60.00 (Average)

[1] Includes General Merchandise, Apparel, and "Other Retail" Groups (latter mostly jewelry and gifts).

[2] Includes Furniture and Appliances, Automotive, Lumber and Hardware and "Non-Store Retailers" Groups.

[3] Includes Food Stores, Drug Stores, Eating and Drinking Places, and Gasoline Service Stations.

PROJECTED RETAIL SALES AND SQUARE FOOTAGE COMPARATIVE

Category of Goods	Total Receipts	Amount Assigned to CBD	1963 Square Footage	Desirable Dollar Volume per Square Ft.	1975 Square Footage Needed	Additional Square Footage Needed
Primary Retail	$12,565,059	$11,381,984	134,600	$60.00	189,700	55,100
Secondary Retail	$17,664,516	$ 8,397,105	154,000	$40.00	209,928	55,928
Convenience Retail	$16,930,195	$ 5,529,171	99,200	$80.00	69,115	-30,685
Total	$47,159,770	$25,308,260 (or 53% of total)	387,800	$60.00 (Average)	468,743	111,028 -30,085

Source: Compiled by N. C. DCP.

POPULATION GROWTH TRENDS FOR MOUNT AIRY TOWN, MOUNT AIRY TOWNSHIP, SURRY COUNTY AND THE MOUNT AIRY RETAIL TRADE AREA

	1950 (Census)	1960 (Census)	1965 (Est. by DCP)	1970 (Proj.)	1975 (Proj.)
Mount Airy Town	7,192	7,055	7,200	8,000	8,500
Mount Airy Township	19,383	20,704	21,300	21,759	22,448
Surry County	45,593	48,205	48,900	49,600	50,300
Mount Airy's Retail Trade Area	N/A	N/A	36,918	37,400	38,853

N/A - Not available.

Source: Compiled by N. C. Division of Community Planning.

EMPLOYMENT OF MOUNT AIRY RESIDENTS FOR 1950 AND 1960 FROM CENSUS DATA AND FOR 1970 BY MODIFIED STRAIGHT-LINE PROJECTIONS

	1950	1960	1970
Total Employed	3,221	3,073	3,275*
Agriculture & Forestry	36	35	34
Manufacturing	1,336	1,360	1,384
Mining & Quarrying	31	30	29
Construction	153	130	107
Transportation, Communications, and Utilities	145	95	105*
Commerce:			
All Retail & Wholesale	684	585	686*
Finance, Insurance, etc.	65	85	105
Business & Repair Services	64	80	96
Personal Services:			
Private Household	215	212	209
Other Personal, Hotel, Entertainment, etc.	47	27	37*
Professional Services:			
Public Administration	75	80	85
All Education, Medical & Other	268	292	316
Other or not given	102	62	82*

Source: U. S. Census Data, compiled by N. C. Division of Community Planning.

*These figures were increased from what the straight-line projection showed by a total of 350 employees to take care of the expected northside annexation which should occur before 1970.

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RETAIL SALES BY CATEGORIES OF GOODS, 1954, 1963 and 1975

Category of Goods	1954	Per Cent Total	1963	Per Cent Total	Factor Used	1963 Per Capita Retail Sales	Proj. 1975 Ret. Sales (Based on 38,853 Trade Area Pop.)	Assign-able to CBD in 1975	Per Cent
Food stores	$4,196,000	18.8	$ 6,272,000	20.5	20.0	$ 231	$ 9,423,795	$ 3,141,265	33.0
Eating places	821,000	3.7	1,075,000	3.5	3.7	43	1,754,213	877,107	50.0
General Merchandise	2,466,000	11.0	1,850,000	6.0	6.3	73	2,978,082	2,978,082	100.0
Apparel stores	1,773,000	7.9	3,338,000	10.9	10.3	119	4,854,682	4,854,682	100.0
Furniture & appliances	1,312,000	5.9	2,475,000	8.1	8.0	92	3,753,200	2,814,900	75.0
Automotive group	4,544,000	20.4	5,766,000	18.8	17.5	202	8,240,721	2,746,907	33.0
Gasoline stations	1,612,000	7.2	2,320,000	7.6	7.2	83	3,386,039	564,340	17.0
Lumber & hardware	2,363,000	10.6	2,549,000	8.3	10.0	116	4,732,295	2,366,148	50.0
Drug stores	1,006,000	4.5	1,635,000	5.3	5.0	58	2,366,148	946,459	40.0
Other retail stores	2,226,000	10.0	2,833,000	9.2	10.0	116	4,732,295	3,549,220	75.0
Non-store retailers	--	--	563,000	1.8	2.0	23	938,300	469,150	50.0
Total	$22,319,000	100.0	$30,676,000	100.0	100.0	$1,156	$47,159,770	$25,308,260	53.0 (average)

Source: Compiled by N. C. DCP.

THE PLAN

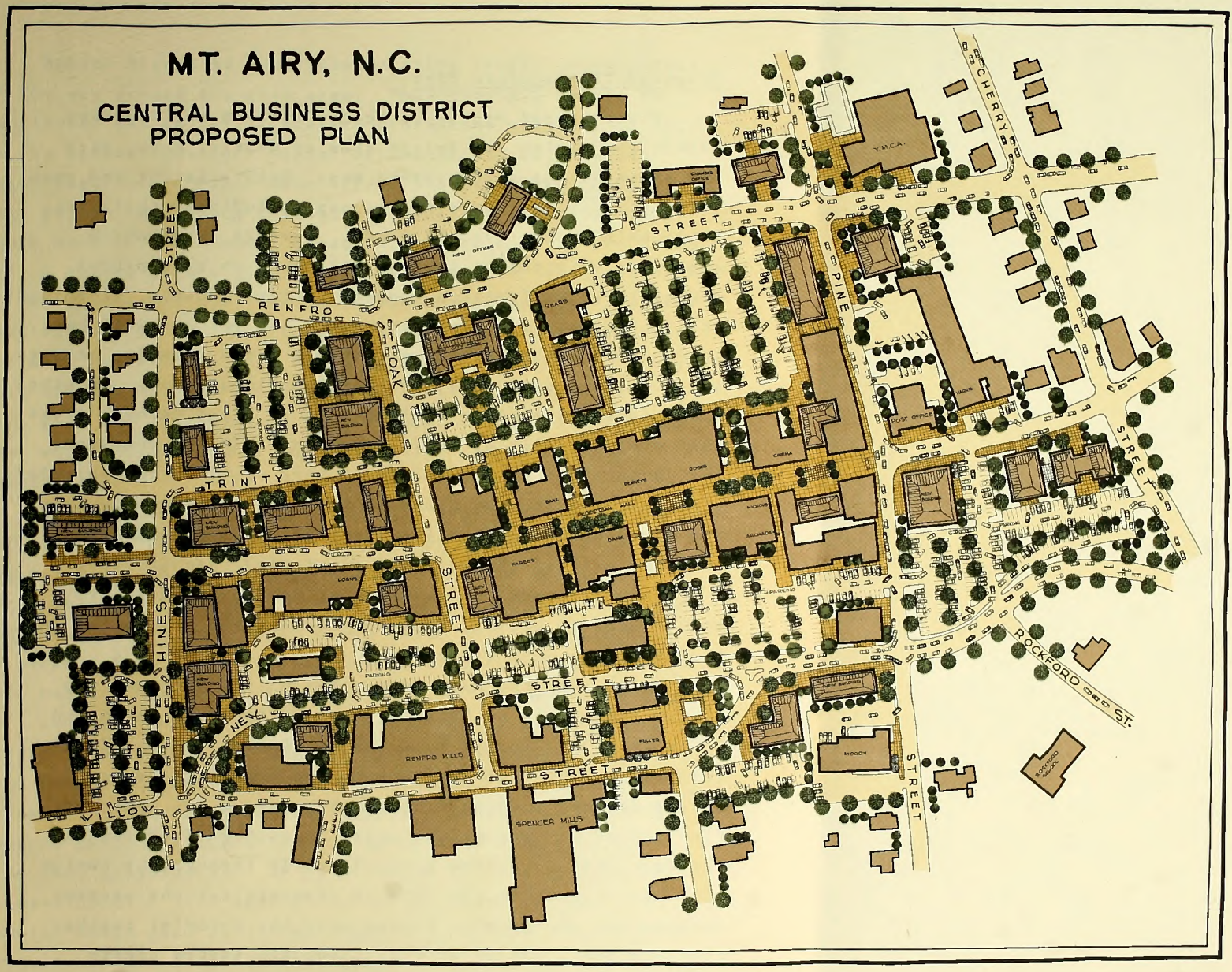
MAJOR ASPECTS OF THE PLAN

The preliminary plan presented here is the result of a group effort to arrive at a direction for the central area of Mount Airy to be followed in its future development. The coordinated efforts of the City Council, the Planning Commission, the Mayor's Downtown Committee, the Downtown Merchants Association, the Redevelopment Commission, the Chamber of Commerce and the Division of Community Planning have all been instrumental in the development of this study.

Collectable data and statistical information that can be verified in Mount Airy doesn't add much depth to the obvious problems at hand. The groups mentioned above, the townspeople and particularly its merchants know that there are serious shortcomings within the business area and that time is only going to compound them. It is not the problem, but its solution that needs immediate and dramatic attention.

Mount Airy will always be a town and it will always have a shopping area in its downtown. It is a question now of whether the merchants and citizens at large want just a small town situation which supplies only the necessities and an average variety of merchandise or would the people of the area like to have and support a major central shopping facility. A downtown shopping facility is needed that not only will provide the selection and quality of merchandise desired, but will develop as an area that the town's citizens will enjoy being a part of, not only in their daily shopping trips, but socially as a desirable and enjoyable place to visit.

The following aspects of the preliminary plan are discussed in some detail in an attempt to explain the proposals and recommendations presented here.


MT. AIRY, N.C.
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
PROPOSED PLAN
RENFRO
TRINITY
STREET
OAK
PINE
CHERRY
HINES
WILLOW
NEW
ROCKFORD
Y.M.C.A.
POST OFFICE
RENFRO MILLS
SPENCER MILLS
LEGEND
EXISTING BUILDINGS
PROPOSED BUILDINGS
PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION
STREETS & PARKING
TREES

Proposed Thoroughfare Plan

The proposed system of roads, streets and highways within the center and fringe area of Central Mount Airy are shown on the accompanying map. Both existing and proposed streets are shown on the map to indicate their relationship to the overall needs. Several roads which appear as existing on the map will have to be improved before they can function properly. Realignments, widenings, straightenings, new pavement, curbs and gutters will have to be constructed in many situations where existing streets are now being used at a low traffic volume count. In other situations new systems will have to be built through areas that are partially or fully developed. These extensions and connections will prove to be more costly than improving older streets in most cases, but in the long run the city and its downtown will solve its most pressing traffic problems only by the development of these new streets.

To understand the development of the thoroughfare plan better it will be necessary to examine the system and the proposals more closely.

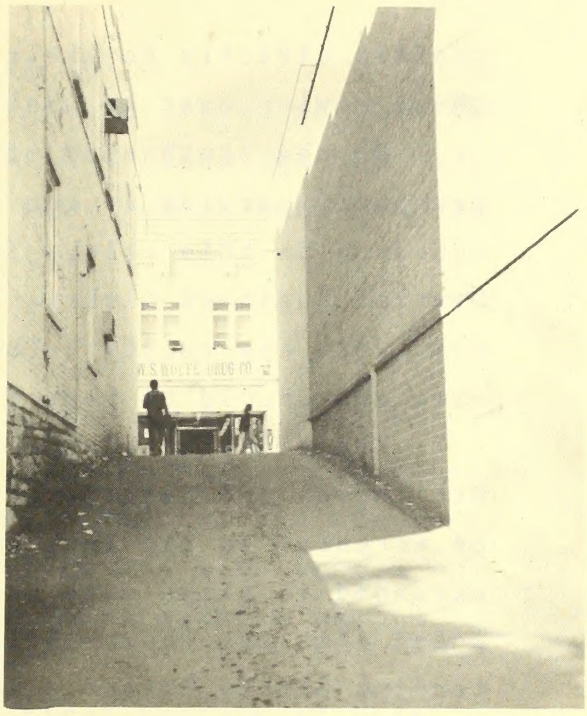
At present the main approaches to the city and the downtown area are on highway U. S. 52 from the north and south and on U. S. 601 from the southwest. U. S. 52 bypasses the center of the city to the west with several access streets leading from the highway to the core area. Pine Street represents the major cross-town facility in the east-west direction going directly through the center of town. Access to the city is adequate for the present volumes but the problem begins once the motorist reaches the core area. It is at this point the system breaks down and no longer serves its proper functions as described in the objectives section of this study. To remedy this problem and to develop a working internal circulation system the following proposals are recommended:

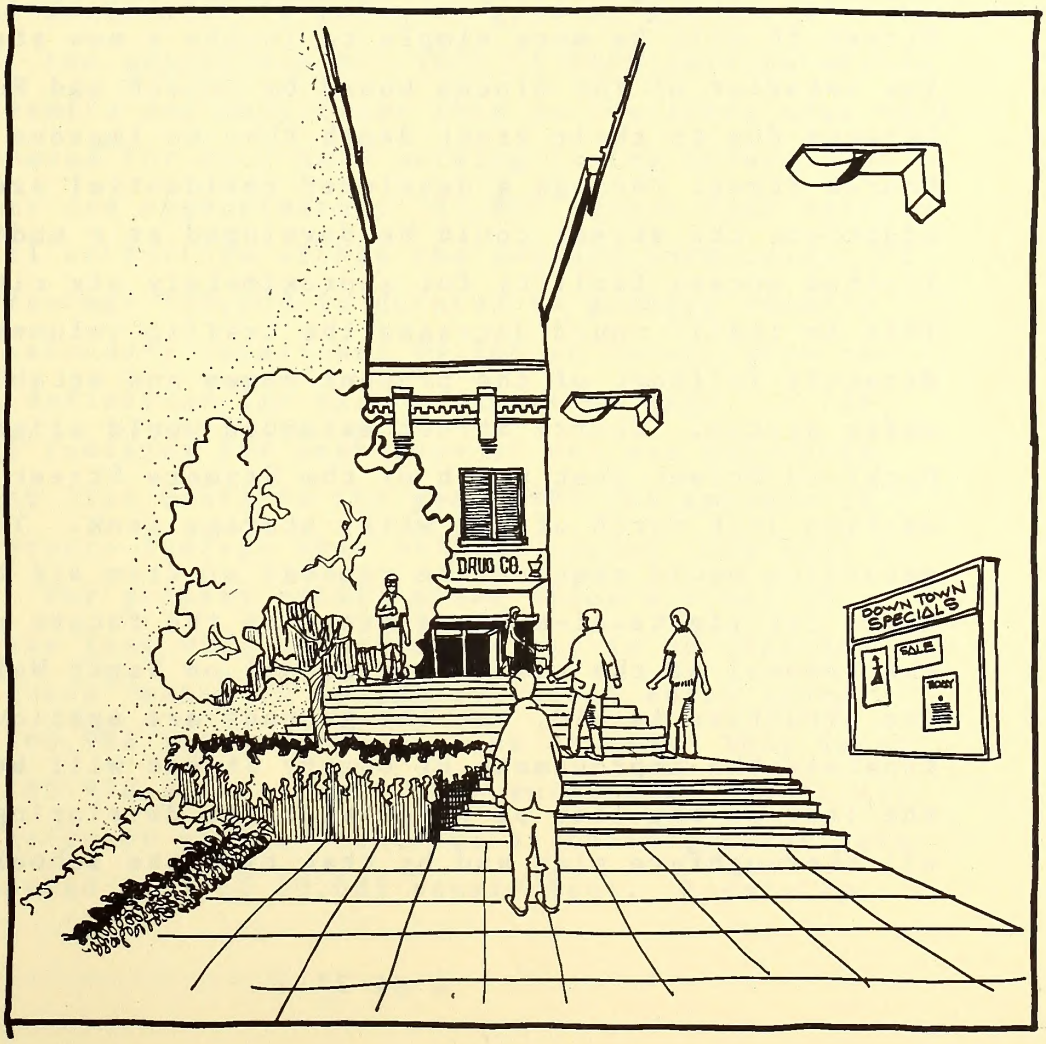
Renfro Street is presently carrying traffic one-quarter of the way around the core area. This function should be continued, but to facilitate the cross-town movement as well as the access movements Renfro Street should be extended south parallel to South Main Street crossing East Church, East Wellon and Korner Streets and finally tying back into South Main at the Hamberg Street intersection. To the north end of Renfro Street from the Hines Street intersection north it is recommended that Renfro be widened, improved and, beginning near the Smith Street intersection, should curve to the west and realign with North Main Street at or above the Main and Elm Streets intersection. This realignment would then give the east side of town a complete cross-town route that would provide direct access to and around the core fringe area.

To complement the development of Renfro Street on the east side of the downtown it will be necessary to create a balancing street on the west side of the core area. Unfortunately, no easy solution is readily available and there are several major obstacles to be dealt with in attempting to establish this part of the system. Willow Street ties into Lebanon Street on the north side of town and then runs in a southerly direction until it intersects with Franklin Street about halfway across the central business district. Also Willow Street is very narrow between Virginia and Franklin Streets at the area it passes between Renfro and Spencer Mills. Alternatives to using Willow Street are even more complicated. If an entirely new system were to be developed it will have to be located west of the mill complex which puts it in the edge of the public housing project. A new facility would require buying access through approximately six residential blocks and acquiring one elementary school building and site. Also it is felt that a location to the west of the mill or housing project would be too far from the core area and would not function properly.

Therefore, it is proposed that Willow Street be retained, and that section from the proposed intersection with Hines Street to the intersection with Franklin Street should be developed as half of a pair of one-way streets. A new street should be developed as the other half of the pair. This pairing of the streets will require extending Market Street both north and south to realign with Willow. To the north of Virginia Street, Market Street should be extended for about three hundred feet then curved west to tie into Hines and Willow Streets. The extended street will go through an existing parking lot and a small residence. As the street goes south of Virginia Street it will pass between Renfro Mills and the grocery store on Oak Street, then through the area that is now occupied by several old stores facing Market Street, then across Franklin Street and parallel to the present Dixie Street, pass through the area occupied by the warehouses and garages facing Dixie, cross Pine Street, go across the parking area facing Pine Street then cross Rockford Street and then swing to the west across the rear edge of the school property to realign with Spring Street. Spring Street is included in the overall thoroughfare plan, to serve the area to the south of the city. By connecting Willow and Springs Streets a cross-town system is developed that will allow traffic to reach the core area easily or bypass it, thereby causing less congestion in the downtown.

To the north edge of the downtown Hines Street is proposed to be extended east across Junction Street toward the river until it intersects with Riverside Drive. At the Renfro and Hines Street intersection it is proposed that Hines be extended west across Trinity Street, across North Main, across Willow Street and then in a southwesterly direction to realign with Virginia Street below the Public Housing Project. This series of extensions and connections will provide a north side cross-town facility to carry




DRUG CO.
DOWN TOWN SPECIALS
SALE

traffic directly to the core area with a smooth flow for those moving east to west.

On the south side of the core area Pine Street is presently serving as the cross-town road and will probably continue in this role. It passes through the edge of the Central Business District and then runs almost east and west into the county. This facility as is, serves a large area and should be kept with some minor improvements.

The overall thoroughfare plan as set forth in the "Land Use Survey and Development Plan" proposes that Church Street be extended to tie into Riverside Drive to the east and extended to align with Rockford to the south. It is proposed that the Church Street extensions be replaced by extending Cherry Street. The eastern alignment will be somewhat easier to tie into the Riverside and Pine Streets intersection due to the steep grade at the end of Church Street. Although Cherry Street is much shorter than Church Street it will be more simple to locate a new street within the interior of the blocks bound by Church and Rockford Streets due to their great depth than to improve and widen Church Street through a developed residential area. In addition, the street could be developed as a modified limited access facility for approximately six city blocks. This in itself would decrease the traffic volumes going directly in front of the present homes and establish a safer system. Cherry Street extended would align with Rockford Street just north of the Haymore Street intersection just north of the water storage tank. This whole extension would require the removal of from six to eight homes for rights-of-way and hinge on the future plans for the removal of the elementary school on South Main Street. The structure is old, but the grounds are spacious. Fortunately the improvement of Cherry Street will be one of the last on the list of priorities for developing the overall thoroughfare plan and by that time the school will have

made its decision whether to move or stay.

With the completion of this proposed system the Central Business Area will have a smooth traffic flow from all sides of the city. The customer will be provided an easy path to enter and circulate within the downtown.

Proposed Parking

The development of ample off-street parking will be one of the most critical phases of development in the Central Business District of Mount Airy. Fortunately there appears to be a solution to the problem and with proper cooperation and effort there can be ample parking spaces provided.

It has been determined in the first section of this report that there is, conservatively, a shortage of 504 customer parking spaces in the core area. If we are to believe that Mount Airy is going to grow at all as is projected to the population for 1975 of 8500 persons within the city's limits and many times this in the trade area will produce a demand for much more parking in the future. At present there are approximately 387,800 square feet devoted to commercial activities within the defined core area. Of this total footage 134,600 is devoted to primary retail, 154,000 to secondary retail and 99,200 to convenience retail. (See definition for each category on page . If these square footages for each type of use are projected on a straight line basis to the year 1975 the amounts of commercial square footage that will be needed then will be as follows: For primary retail sales space a total of 189,700 square feet will be needed. This is an increase of 55,100 square feet. In secondary retail sales space a total of 209,928 square feet will be needed. This is an increase of 55,928 square feet. Convenience retail facilities will decrease if they continue at their present rate with a projected loss of 30,085 square feet. Hopefully

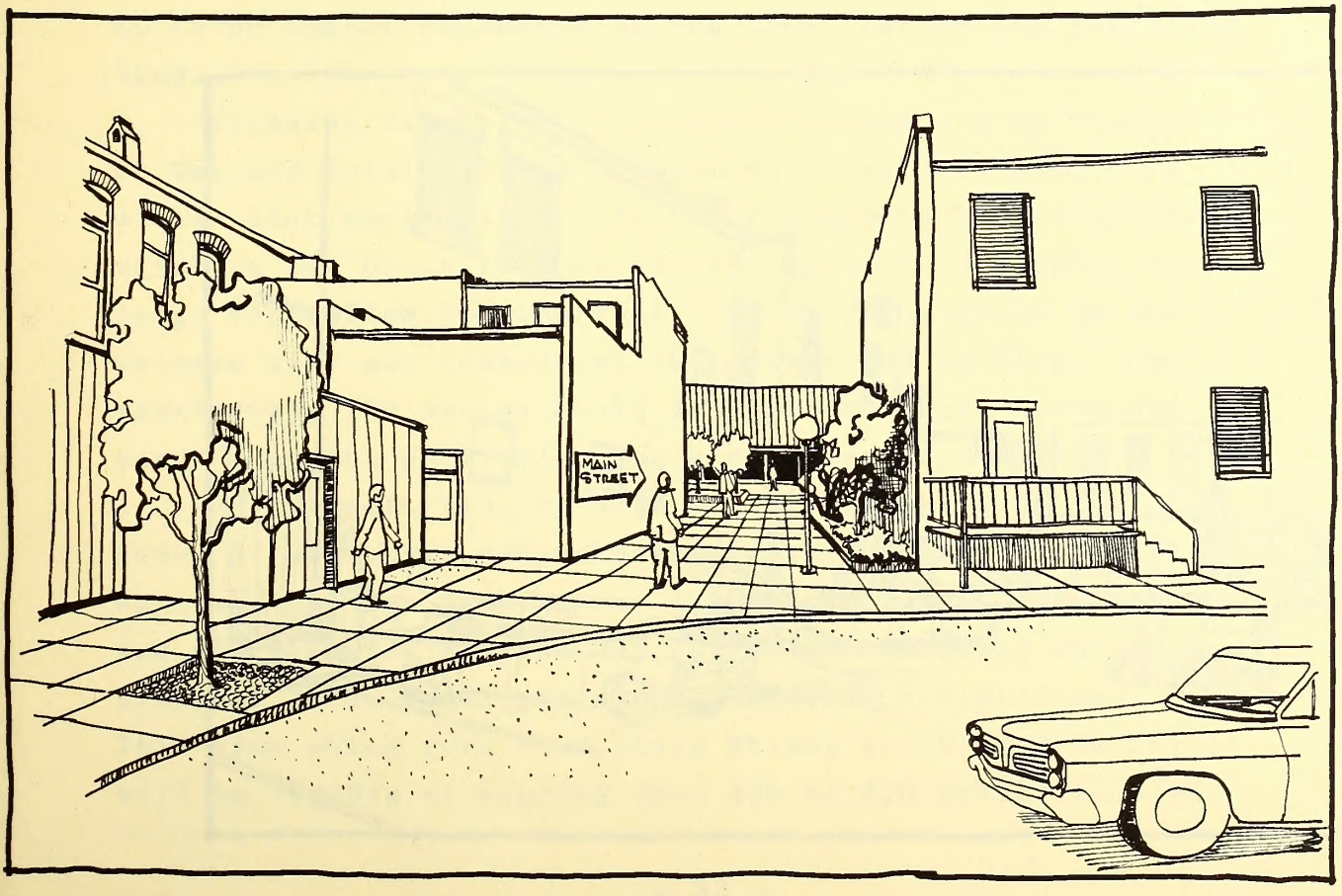
this trend in convenience facilities will change if efforts are made in the downtown area to revitalize it. Therefore, this loss in convenience retail space has not been subtracted from the total of 111,028 additional square feet of primary and secondary space that will be needed by the year 1975. Some of this space will be new and some will be old or existing space that has been renovated, but the important issue here is that additional parking must be programed to serve these projected commercial uses.

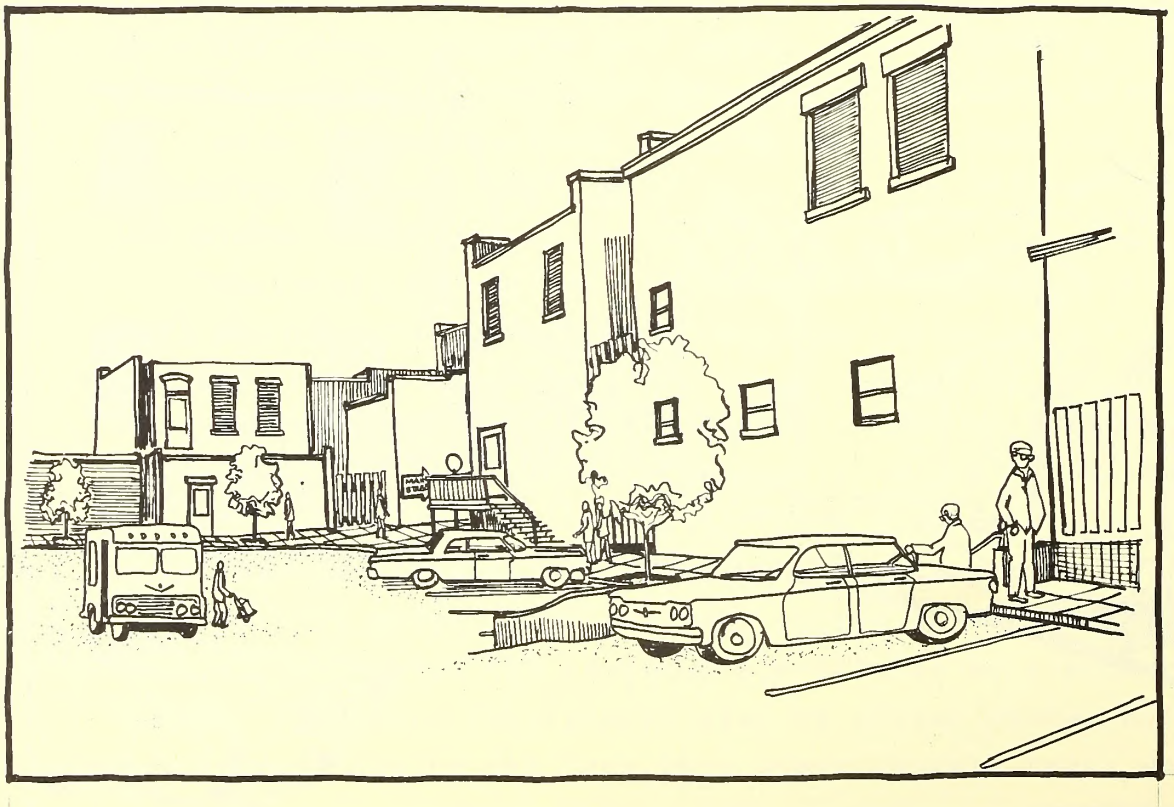
If the 189,700 square feet of primary retail sales is matched at a two to one ratio, that is, two square feet of parking for each one square foot of commercial space and if a figure of 400 square feet per parking space is used (this includes maneuvering areas, unuseable corners and any incidental areas), there will be a need for 948 spaces. It should be noted for comparison that large new shopping centers usually do not have less than a three to one ratio and may go as high as five to one in their parking ratio. These merchants know full well that during much of the years many of these spaces will not be used, but they also know that their customer will always have a parking space and will remember this when choosing his shopping place.

If a one to one ratio is used for secondary and convenience retail there will be a need for 525 spaces and 173 spaces respectively.

In total, by the year 1975 the core area of Mount Airy should have 1649 customer parking spaces within 350 to 400 feet of the major shopping area. Employees should be required to park in the less desirable fringe parking areas of the downtown. Further, this figure should be considered as a minimum under the assumption that if more spaces are available more shoppers will use the downtown area.

Of this needed 1649 customer spaces it is estimated that approximately 859 spaces are available to customers today. This last figure must also be viewed rather conservatively due to the fact that every useable space was


MAIN
STREET



counted. Many of these would normally be considered sub-standard either by location or poor physical development. The differences in these two figures give a deficiency by the year of 1975 of 790 prime permanent customer spaces. In addition to the proposed spaces some existing on-street spaces will be lost when roads are improved or closed. With these spaces included, the total figure would reach nearly 1,000 spaces to be developed. This is certainly a goal that can be worked toward.

The following areas are proposed for development of off-street parking spaces.

Starting on Renfro Street the existing lot in the area directly behind Rose's Department Store that is presently being used for parking should be fully developed and improved. This space alone can provide at least 300 prime spaces. Moving north it is proposed that the area now occupied by the City Hall and Fire Department should be redeveloped and, along with the vacant lot which has some metered space, be constructed as a total parking area with 60 to 80 spaces depending on the final use of the remaining land.

Crossing Oak Street the tobacco warehouse on the corner of Oak and Trinity Streets represents the only structure within that small block. It is proposed that Nations Street which is one block long be closed, thereby developing one large block from two and that the resulting block be developed with new commercial structures and parking. Approximately 180 spaces could be provided here, again depending on the particular use and design of the land.

To the west side of Main Street beginning at the proposed Hines Street extension and going south there will be an area (between the rear of the stores facing Main Street and the proposed new one-way north-south street) which is proposed to be developed almost entirely for parking. This area which runs from Hines Street south to Pine Street will be capable of storing from 450 to 600 vehicles on one

level. The quantity will very greatly depend on the final design and arrangement. In addition if decks were to be added as in the case of the new United Savings and Loan Building the number of spaces could be doubled or tripled.

All of the lots mentioned here and those shown on the Development Plan are located directly on one of the major thoroughfares proposed as the inner loop for the downtown area. This system of being able to circulate easily and find a parking space near the main streets and still be directly behind the major stores and shops will prove to be a most workable combination.

The area here proposed for parking represents a very flexible area and should more than provide the number of spaces that will be needed in the next ten to fifteen years if the solution is pursued with sufficient vigor on the part of the merchants and officials of city hall.

Pedestrian Circulation

In the past the customer as a pedestrian has been given less attention than almost any other aspect of the Central Business District. It appears that the merchant is willing to cater to the potential customer only after the customer has entered his place of business. In the future the needs of the walking customer will have to be given as much attention as the riding customer. Every riding customer has to become a pedestrian before he can visit any primary retail shop. Therefore, one of the objectives of future development in the central area, as previously mentioned will be to develop an extensive system of walk, accessways and improved pedestrian circulation areas.

It is proposed and can be seen by the preliminary plan that all of the off-street parking area of the future should be tied directly to the main shopping streets by access areas and walkways. The present vehicular access alley from Main Street to the existing parking lot located

off Renfro Street should be one of the first such walkways to be improved. Many customers use this route from the parking area each day and if it were improved with steps and terraces in place of the very steep hill that exists now it is most likely that many more persons would use both the lot and the accessway. The access walkway or arcade which connects the rear entrance way of Davis' Arcade Building with Main Street is a simple example of a pedestrian route that works cery well and will serve even better when substantial parking areas have been established on Market Street. Vehicular alleys that can be turned into pedestrian accessways represents one of the first possibilities for development within the downtown.

Ultimately the pedestrian should be able to walk behind every store, shop and office that faces Main Street as easily as he walks in front of them today. If off-street parking is developed in the proposed manner then shoppers will more than ever need these means of immediate access to the shopping area. These walkways must be developed in close conjunction with the improvements and renovations of the rear entrances of business places. Properly developed, these walkways will not handicap service and delivery of merchandise and, in the overall view, will improve the appearance and the appeal to the customer.

Due to the great number of variables that could develop in the final placement of walkways in the long implementation periods this study will not attempt to describe each and every proposed location. On the Preliminary Downtown Design Plan the area devoted to foot traffic has been noted.

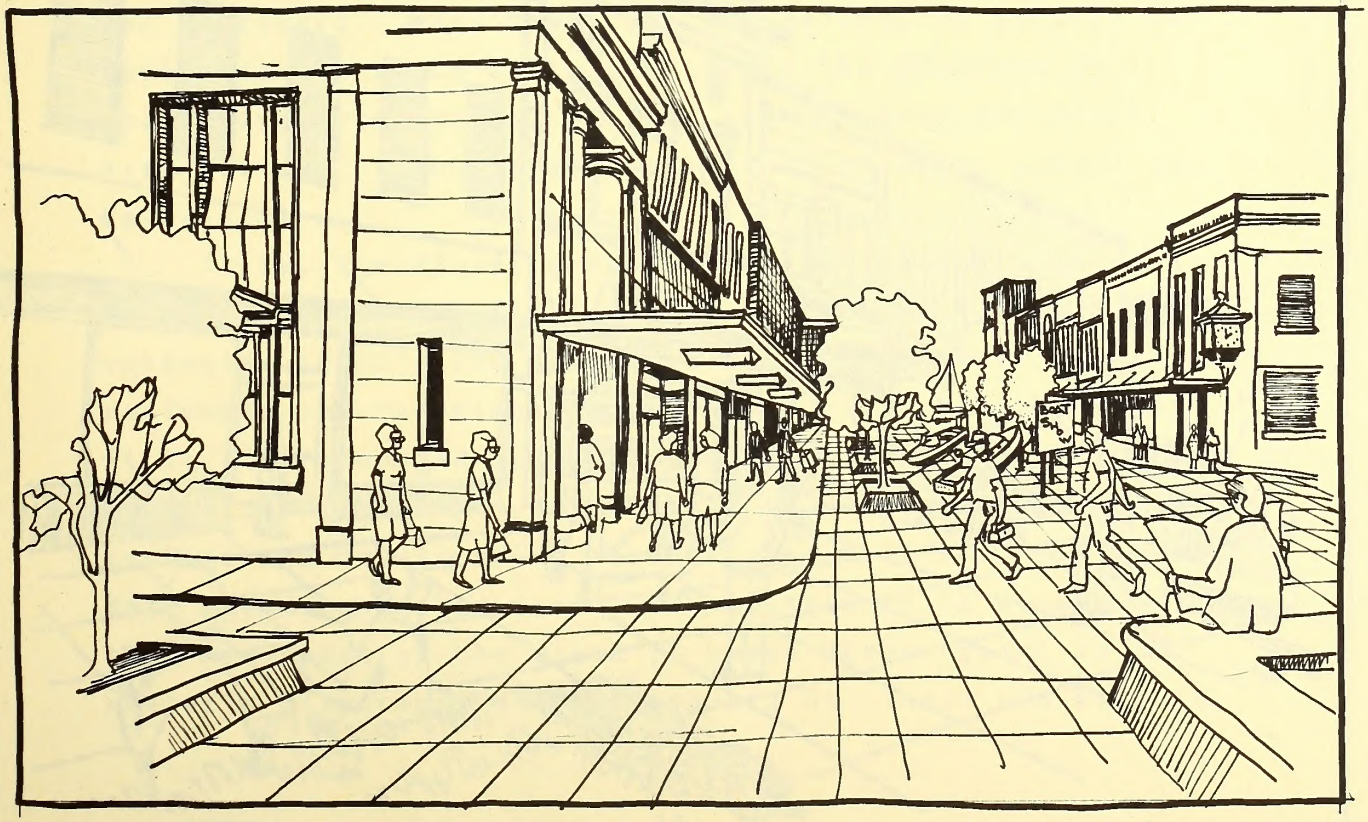
The basic motives for developing new means of access are (1) to give the walking customer a special place immediately upon leaving his vehicle; (2) to provide a pleasant and safe access to the main shopping street; (3) and to provide this access in an environment that will not only serve the basic functional needs of the customer

and the merchant, but more, will provide the amenities of good lighting, smooth walks, flowers, shrubs and trees in such a way that each visit to the downtown will bring both pride and enjoyment to the individual.

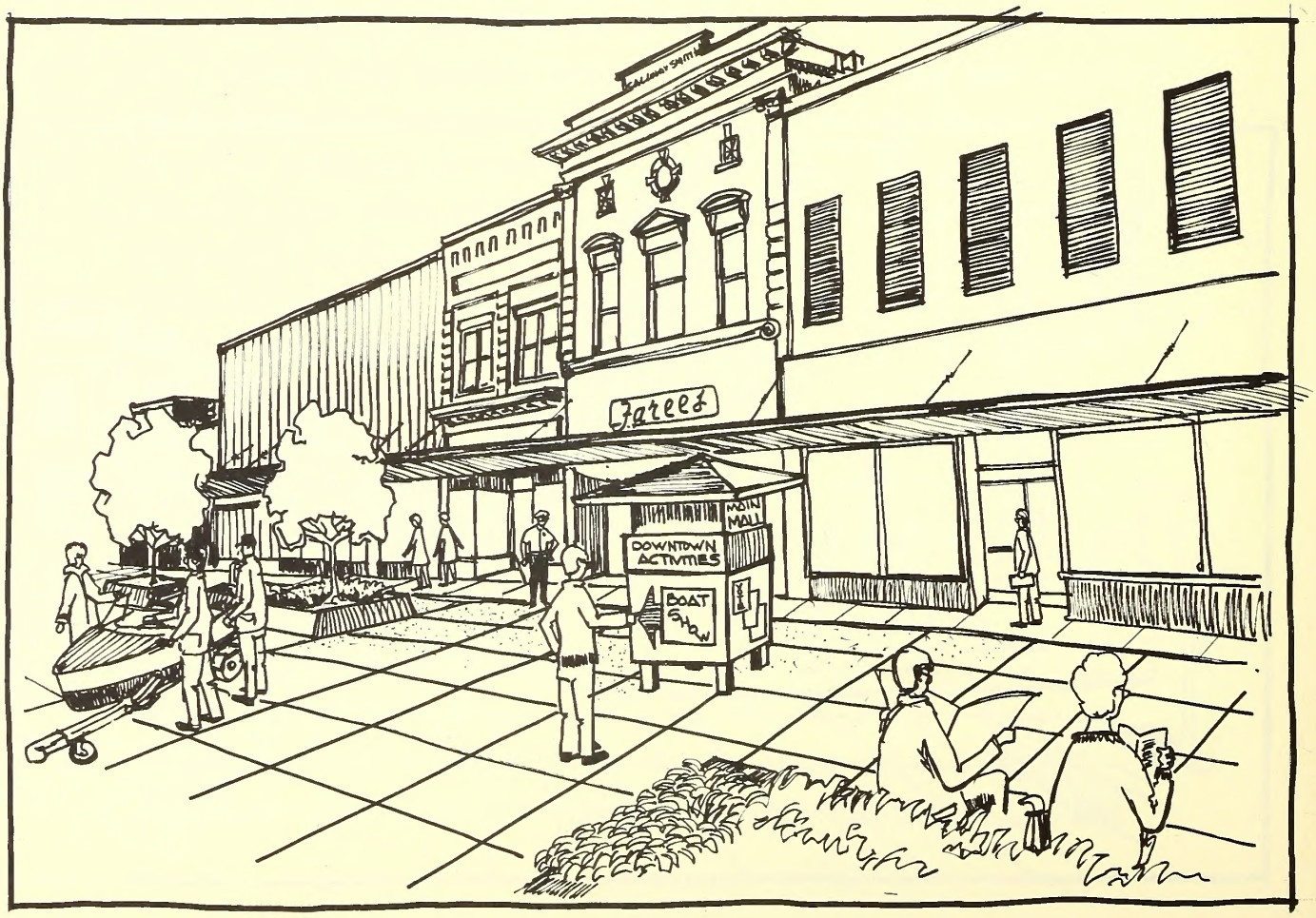
Malls and Special Features

Keeping in mind what has been said about pedestrians accessways which lead from off-street parking areas to shopping streets it is logical to ask, why stop the pedestrian areas at the sidewalks of Main Street? If the primary function of the central core area is to provide a concentration of retail shops, services and professional offices so that the customer may take advantage of them without the bother of driving all about the city then it is again logical to ask, why not make this process as convenient as possible? Theoretically, an ideal solution for the downtown area would be to provide a walking court or area for the pedestrian customers, surround this area with shops and stores, surround the building and walking area with large numbers of orderly parking spaces, wrap a major road or collector street around the parking and finally tie this road to every major populated area within a two hours drive. This would be an ideal solution for the downtown area. This concept is strived for in most towns and shopping centers throughout the county.

Thus far in this study all phases of the ideal central area have been dealt with except the walking area or, as they are commonly called, malls. The mall concept is not new, in fact, it is very old and a well accepted solution in many countries of the world. The automobile in our country has so ruled and dictated the layout of our cities that malls never really were established. But, although in the past the automobile kept the mall idea from developing, it may well be that the automobile will be the cause for many new and different malls being developed in



Jarees
FOR RENT


Jarees
MAIN MALL
DOWNTOWN ACTIVITIES
BOAT SHOW

the future.

A mall must be more than just a place for walking. It must at one time be a sidewalk, a promenade, a flower garden, a miniature park, a display area for many different interests, a place to have music, dances, sports rallies, political speeches and, in short, it must be a place where many things can happen and a few are happening at all times.

The patterns of the past have been to develop malls by closing streets to vehicular circulation and then devote the space to pedestrian movement with varying degrees of attention being given to the amenities mentioned above. The decision to close a street is not one that can be made solely on the basis of the desire to develop a mall. There are many ramifications to be considered when a move of this sort is contemplated. The two major problems to be solved are: one, traffic after the street is closed; and two, the replacement of parking spaces that are removed. There are other problems such as emergency access for fire trucks and ambulances, services to the stores and the location of utilities which must be solved before the first stone can be turned. Many towns and cities find it totally unrealistic to create malls because of the problems in satisfying these needs. In the case of downtown Mount Airy all of the technical problems of creating a mall can be solved.

It is, therefore, proposed that the two blocks of Main Street between Pine and Oak Streets be closed to vehicular traffic and developed in such a manner that a desirable and functional pedestrian mall can be provided. It is also proposed that the section of Franklin Street from Willow Street to Main Street be closed to vehicular traffic and developed as a pedestrian mall which will tie into the Main Street mall. In addition it is recommended that one-third of the block of Moore Street going in an easterly direction from Main should be closed and tied in

with the Main Street Mall. Both the Franklin Street Mall and the Moore Street Mall will serve as access routes for parkers walking into the main shopping area. It is also apparent that due to the steep grade changes in these streets some form of steps will have to be included in their final design. Two short sections of Virginia Street are also proposed to be closed. This will include the first 150 feet west from Main Street, and the section between Dixie and Willow Streets. The mall areas should be so designed that ample attention is given the walking customer or visitor in terms of smooth paved surfaces, uncongested circulation paths, areas for resting with benches and shade, an abundance of planting materials and trees, water in the form of fountains and pools, open display areas, and overall, the mall should be tied to the stores and accessways leading in from theoff-street parking areas in a logical and convenient manner.

This recommendation is a broad and all inclusive statement with general terms that will have to have much more detailed study before they can be implemented or be ready for construction to begin. The eventual development of the mall area will form a new identity for Mount Airy and hopefully will provide a stimulus for growth, development and a general sense of pride in the city.

There are many other locations that can be developed as access routes for pedestrians, landscaped courts or squares and small malls. It is not possible at this point to consider each and every potential space within the downtown area and it will only be with time and imagination that the best possibilities can be taken advantage of.

New Structures and Square Footages

Two of the primary objectives in the revitalization of the downtown area are an attempt to maintain a close knit shopping area and to provide areas for new growth and expansion. To accomplish these goals it is required that

adequate space be found for new retail facilities and parking within an area that is already overcrowded and lacking in parking spaces. It is obvious that some structures will have to be renovated extensively and occupied by uses that are more compatible with the downtown while other structures are going to have to be removed entirely. Large new major business uses such as department stores demand high square footages and extensive parking wherever they locate and it will be the responsibility of the merchants, downtown committee, city officials and renewal commission to provide for these needs. If it is not done the major generators will locate on the fringe of the city and compete directly with the core area rather than working with it.

It has been determined during this study that there are in the downtown central core area about 14 dilapidated buildings, 31 needing major repair, 43 requiring minor repair and only 22 that were considered to be adequate in all physical respects. This amounts to about 40 percent of the structures that are substandard in some respect. The immediate fringe area of the downtown is in much the same condition with fewer buildings being dilapidated, but more needing major or minor repair.

These buildings presently contain approximately 387,800 square feet of business uses that are considered compatible with the downtown area. If the figures are projected on a straight line basis (see table 13b) by 1975 there will be an additional need for 111,028 square feet of building space within the downtown area.

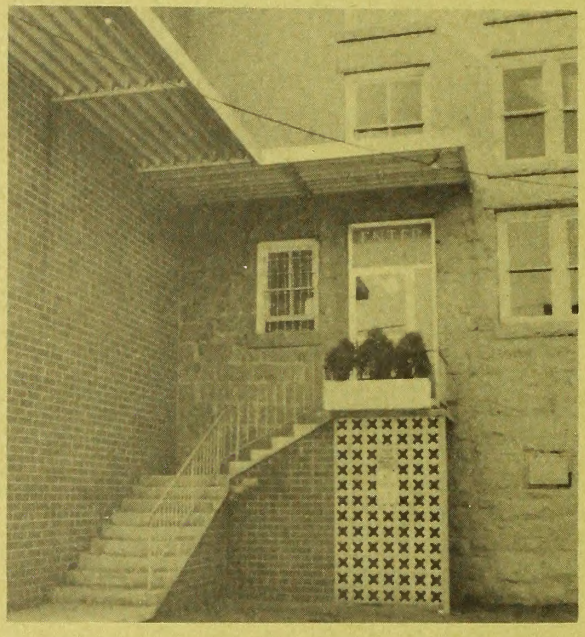
On the Preliminary Design Plan for the downtown many new structures are indicated. (Those with the square pattern on the roof). There are approximately 148,600 square feet of new space shown on the plan. This figure represents only a one floor measurement and many of the sites shown would necessitate two and three story structures due to the change in grade from street level to the

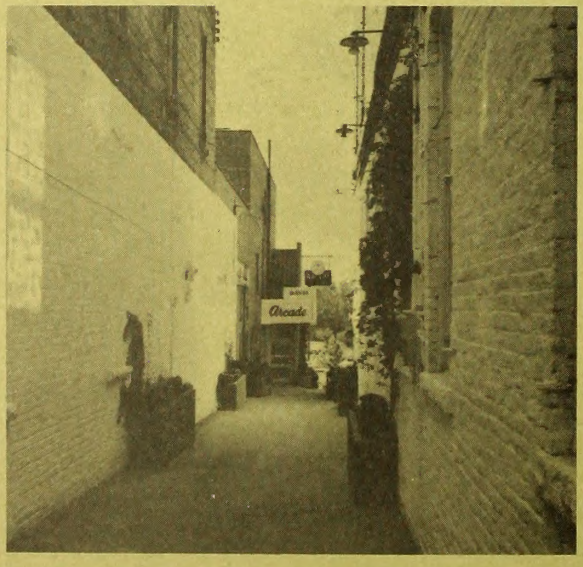
rear of the lots.

Within the area bounded by Renfro, Pine, Willow and Hines Streets there are 69,600 square feet shown at one level or approximately 140,000 if two story buildings were developed. It is reasonable to assume that all of these proposed structures will not be developed and that much of the future needs will be provided by renovating existing structures. Therefore, the proposed sites must be looked at as the best potential sites in terms of the present buildings and uses on the sites. The major concern here is that there is potentially enough property that can be developed in close proximity to the core area to take care of needs that have been projected for the next ten years.

IMPLEMENTATION

ROSES




Arcade

APPROACHES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

Thus far the study has been devoted to the end product of a planned process, namely the revitalized downtown or core area of Mount Airy. The central area has been broken down into its basis parts and functions, discussed and then some form of recommendations have been suggested for future development. Up until this point no thought has been given to the "who" and "how" of the actual physical rebuilding of the core area.

The "who" part of the problem can be answered in general terms by saying that every one who lives or works in Mount Airy should be interested in the development of the central area. This would also include those merchants and businessmen who presently have their business establishments on the edge of town. The more healthy the central core area of the city is, the greater the number of people that can be expected to go there to shop and do business and in turn the more people who will pass in front of these fringe area stores.

Merchant and Citizen Involvement

To be more specific in answering the "who" question there will be three major groups that will have to take the responsibility of implementing the plan. The first responsibility for the improvements should be with those who stand to directly gain the most from having the central area redeveloped. This would be the merchant-businessman group. Thus far this group has already organized itself into a Downtown Merchants Committee and has worked to arrive at or refine many of the ideas that are presented within this study. In addition this group has provided off-street parking on a subsidized basis with different merchants contributing funds to finance the lots.

In the future the redevelopment of the downtown will hinge directly on the enthusiasm and drive that the central area merchants express in deeds and actions. The revitalization of the downtown will not be free. No city government, no state government and not even the federal government is going to give the funds to develop a decaying central area, unless much effort is demonstrated by the local citizens. If the local merchants are not willing to finance some of the costs then why should any other group? Therefore, it should be understood in the very beginning that the business community of the core area will have to be willing to invest in the future of not only their own establishments, but in the core area generally. It will be an investment that may not be able to show an immediate profit, but it will be one that will in all likelihood give a greater return in the long run on the amount invested than most business transactions.

The following is a list of proposals that should be taken as a responsibility of the Downtown Merchants Committee in addition to their general obligation to support, maintain and encourage the development of the central core area.

(1) Organize the downtown merchants in such a manner that the core area can be promoted as a unified shopping facility, encourage simultaneous sales programs and advertise in out of town papers to draw new business. It will be surprising the results that can be gained simply by active promotion. Mount Airy can build a new image of itself in a very short time.

(2) Employers and employees should realize that the parking spaces they occupy close to their place of business are badly needed by paying customers. Every effort should be made to keep as many of the "close in" spaces open as possible. This can be done by having the employees park on the fringe of the downtown area.

(3) Individual merchants should strive to improve the general appearance of their place of business. This may range from cleaning up the area in the rear of the building, applying a new coat of paint to the front or back of the building, completely refronting a structure, developing the rear as a customer's entrance, renovating the interior of the business place, planting a tree or some shrubbery or removing a gaudy or obsolete sign. Good merchandising requires a proper place to carry on business and each merchant would do well to give a critical look at both the inside and the outside of his establishment.

(4) The single greatest group effort that can be carried out by the merchants is the purchase of land to be developed as off-street parking lots. At present there are two areas that should be considered. The existing parking lot just west of Renfro Street and behind the Rose's Store is in several ownerships with one major tract. The loss of this lot would seriously hurt the parking situation and every effort should be made to purchase this area. Also this lot is not in the area tentatively outlined as an urban renewal site. The acquisition of this site, therefore, would not adversely affect the downtown's ability to qualify for renewal.

This same situation exists in the proposed site on Nation Street and would also provide close-in parking for many merchants. Any parking outside of the proposed renewal areas that can be provided on a permanent basis should be seriously considered as a merchant project.

(5) The most expensive feature of the downtown development will be when the street development or malls are constructed. These pedestrian areas will not be inexpensive if done properly. Each merchant must be willing to pay his share.

To solve this problem the merchants should begin to discuss and decide just how they will pay for these

improvements. The possibilities of group assessment, what is a fair share, and sources of long term financing will have to be decided before the work can begin.

City Government

The city has the responsibility to serve all of its citizens and not give special favors nor discriminate against any group. The central area of the downtown represents the economic center of not only the city, but of the county. Regardless of the fringe development around the city the central core represents the major tax base and highest property values within this large area. This being the case it can hardly be considered favoritism if the city government makes investments to protect this large concentration of economic and social facilities. In many situations the city will be the only organization with means to accomplish a particular task. The officials of the city, both elected and salaried, must develop a strong sense of involvement with the central area problem and more importantly, with their solution. New ideas will be the order of the day and new solutions to old problems will be necessary if the city is to catch up and stay abreast of its problems.

The following are some of the basic responsibilities the official city should address itself to in its role in the physical development of the central area.

(1) As mentioned above, the first ingredient for new growth and development will be that the decision-making people in city government must maintain their awareness of the problems facing the central area and be prepared to assist in every practical means available to them as a legal body. Maintaining a positive attitude will be one of the biggest steps for continued progress that can be made.

(2) The city, to a certain extent, is in the parking business at present and as future areas are made available

either through merchant or renewal efforts the city will be the logical custodian of these areas for their development as parking lots. This responsibility can be handled either as a function within an existing city department or this responsibility could be delegated, through the cooperation of the merchants organization, to a city parking authority. This authority would consist of a group of citizens appointed by the city whose major responsibility would be to provide adequate parking for downtown Mount Airy. Under the existing State Legislation the authority would secure land by purchase, gift or lease, develop the land into a parking facility and manage the facility like a business venture and as a public service. The advantages of the authority system are that they establish a group working solely to provide parking. The areas described in the section dealing with parking should be considered as the primary objectives in the development of an adequate parking program.

(3) Possibly the greatest responsibility of the city will be to promote and guide the implementation of the thoroughfare plan. The road system both leading to and within the core area must function smoothly as a unified whole if it is to properly serve the citizens and visitors to Mount Airy. The city working with the State Highway Commission should make every effort to connect, extend or improve the roads and streets that represent the basic form of the circulation pattern.

The following are dealt with in detail in the section dealing with vehicular circulation, but are listed here as a priority list.

a. Hines Street should be extended north and south to make its proper connections.

b. The one-way pair of streets around the Spencer and Renfro Mill area should be developed.

c. Renfro Street should be extended as proposed first south, then north.

d. The one-way street pair should be extended south to connect with Spring Street.

e. Cherry Street should first be extended north then extended south to realign with Rockford Street. Church Street should remain as the first alternate to this proposal.

(4) Another responsibility of the city government in the near future will be to select a site for and to build a new city hall. A site has been proposed in the preliminary plan and serious thought should be given to the acquiring of this or other sites. Also the impact of a new city hall building will have a definite effect on development within the downtown area. Now would be an excellent time to establish a committee to investigate the space needs of the city and select potential sites while the entire core area is contemplating changes.

Urban Renewal

The Urban Renewal Program as presented by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development represents one of the greatest potentials for development within the downtown that is available. The guidelines and qualifications are strict, but the possibilities are extensive. Redevelopment under Urban Renewal has worked in the past in Mount Airy, it is working at present and there are certainly no reasons that it should not work equally as well in the downtown area in the future. Due to the formidable cost of land acquisition, high development expenses and the overall complications of legal involvement, the problems of development in the central area become almost impossible without a tool for redevelopment such as Urban Renewal.

In the case of the downtown project the major objectives would be the same as those expressed through this study and would be flexible to the extent the local commission needed to change for unforeseen events. The project

would attempt to accomplish its objectives by: one, defining an area within the downtown area that has a sufficient number of substandard structures that it would qualify under the State Statutes and Regulations of the Urban Renewal Authority; two, removing those structures that are of substandard quality and of rehabilitating those structures that could be saved; three, clearing land and reselling it for redevelopment by private sources; four, making land available for development of off-street parking lots either by a parking authority or private enterprise; five, developing that part of the major thoroughfare plan that passes through the redevelopment area; and six, by generally providing the legal organization and means to coordinate such a complicated task as the revitalization of a downtown area.

The tentative renewal project area for the downtown has been defined and will meet the legal qualifications in terms of substandard structures as mentioned above, and if carried to its full conclusions will benefit all of the core area either directly or indirectly. The tentative area is shown here, but it must be remembered that this area is tentative and that once an area is adopted there are still points during the program when the boundaries may be changed.

As can be seen by the map the area includes over half of the central downtown area and some of the fringe area. The fringe area has been included because of the number of substandard structures there, the location of two older elementary schools and the immediate need to complete this phase of the thoroughfare plan which relates to the central area vehicular circulation.

From the size of the proposed area it is also evident that the project should have two or three stages during its implementation. It would be unrealistic to attempt to carry out such a large project in one effort. However, the separate stages should flow from one stage to the next with no lost motion or time.

Summary

In conclusion it must be re-emphasized that the changing of a city is not a simple matter and that every change or variation from what exists today will be brought about only if the citizenry is willing to devote its time, energy and money to each task as it arises. The leadership within the central area must be vigorous in its attempt for revitalization. Individuals and private companies must be kept informed of the development objectives and goals for the downtown. They must realize that a healthy and prosperous central area is vital to the economic life of the entire city and that each citizen, whether he be a downtown merchant or a mill employee will derive many benefits from a successful central area.

Cooperation between people is always better when there is a common goal in view. And it is the goals for the central area that can be used as overall objectives. Private development cannot be dictated by a "Downtown Plan", but private development can and should give some consideration to the implications each new structure will have on its neighboring businesses and the central area as a whole. Each act of development within the downtown is a smaller part of a whole and should contribute to that whole.

The task will be difficult, but the goals are clear and the results will be worthwhile. It remains now to act.